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Drew Griffin: Congressman Mike Pence, Chairman of the House Republican Conference. That makes you the number three of the House Republicans. Do you know what, we're going to follow the lead of our viewers. They want to know about Israel. And that's something you know a lot about on the various committees. You've been over there many times. You've talked directly with the Palestinians, Egyptians, Israelis. And it's this whole idea about what is happening in Gaza. Israel attacks or gets on or tries to stop these ships, it leads to a mess. Did Israel do the right thing?

Rep. Pence: Thanks for having me on, Drew. No one likes to see the loss of life. No one likes to see military confrontation, but Israel has a right of self-defense. And the reality is that Gaza is essentially an isolated, smaller version of a terrorist state. It launched lethal attacks against Israeli civilians in the form of thousands of rockets, and this blockade has saved lives. I know the focus now is the incident on Monday. People are looking into that, and that will all be discussed. But those of us that believe we need to stand with Israel during this time of crisis believe that preserving the blockade and standing with Israel and her right of self-defense is imperative in this moment. And let's be clear, there's not a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Israel allows to be transferred or transfers 10,000 tons of humanitarian aid into Gaza every week. The hospitals are fully stocked. The food markets are fully stocked. This flotilla was embarked on a mission to challenge the blockade. Security forces, Israeli defense forces challenged it, and violence ensued. But ultimately Israel has a right to defend itself.

Drew Griffin: Congressman, even in Congress, this is your fifth term, is that right? You've seen various peace efforts come and go. It's been so frustrating for decades now, and once again it seems we're on the verge of restarting these peace talks, and yet another issue develops where the whole issue flares up again. Are we ever, ever, going to get to a place where the Palestinians, where Hamas will be in a position to negotiate with Israel or if we truly want to get some relief to the Palestinians who are stuck in Gaza, should we not be talking about getting rid of Hamas?

Rep. Pence: Well, let's make a very careful distinction between the Palestinian Authority and the terrorist organization, Hamas. Part of the reason behind this blockade, Drew, is to prevent the flow of arms to the extent they can into Hamas, so Hamas can begin again to use Gaza as a

platform for attacks against Israel. There would be a pathway forward for a peace agreement with Israel. It would be very simple if the Palestinian leadership would recognize unequivocally Israel's right to exist and essentially if it would initiate an effort to dismantle terrorist infrastructure within all the areas under their control. The reality here is that while Israel is often demonized by the international community, the Palestinian leadership has it in their authority today, under the rubric of the old roadmap that we all understand so well, to embrace just a couple of basic truths in the public debate and that would facilitate, I believe, a durable peace. But until that happens, then I think we need to stand by our most cherished ally, Israel, and we need to stand by her ability to defend herself.

Drew Griffin: Let me switch gears really quick. You were an early critic to the Obama Administration response to the oil spill. It's only gotten bigger since then. Do you still feel the same way, that this administration is not doing enough?

Rep. Pence: I believe the administration was slow to respond in the beginning. It took ten days after this incident happened for the president to send cabinet-level officials and the full resources of the federal government into the region. Sadly and astonishingly, the administration continues to be slow to respond. The president I know went to the region, had a press conference last week but, again, what we're hearing from parish leadership in the area, what we're hearing from fishermen, what we're hearing from Governor Bobby Jindal and others, is that, again, you're not seeing the leadership come out of the White House to really begin to drive forward the kind of resources that will be necessary to confront these issues. I saw another network last night literally pulled a local parish leader in with BP, sat them down, and by the end of the meeting BP had agreed to release additional boom that had been tied up and sitting on the shore. This administration, particularly the president, needs to take a more hands-on approach. BP has a responsibility to restrain the flow into the gulf. They have financial responsibility. But that's our coastline and our president, under the law, is obligated to develop a plan for cleanup and to protect the coast, the families and our environment.